



Next battle over access to abortion will focus on pills

By STEPHEN GROVES

Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) —

It took two trips over state lines, navigating icy roads and a patchwork of state laws, for a 32-year-old South Dakota woman to get abortion pills last year. For abortion-seekers like her, such journeys, along with pills sent through the mail, will grow in importance if the Supreme Court follows through with its leaked draft opinion that would overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision and allow individual states to ban the procedure. The woman, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because she was concerned for her family's safety, said the abortion pills allowed her to end an unexpected and high-risk pregnancy and remain devoted to her two children.

But anti-abortion activists and politicians say those cross-border trips, remote doctors' consultations and pill deliveries are what they will try to stop next.

"Medication abortion will be where access to



Boxes of the drug mifepristone line a shelf at the West Alabama Women's Center in Tuscaloosa, Ala., on Wednesday, March 16, 2022.

abortion is decided," said Mary Ziegler, a professor at Florida State University College of Law who specializes in reproductive rights. "That's going to

be the battleground that decides how enforceable abortion bans are." Use of abortion pills has been rising in the U.S. since 2000 when the Food and Drug

Administration approved mifepristone — the main drug used in medication abortions. More than half of U.S. abortions are now done with pills, rather than

surgery, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

Associated Press

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Next battle over access to abortion will focus on pills

Continued from Front

Two drugs are required. The first, mifepristone, blocks a hormone needed to maintain a pregnancy. A second drug, misoprostol, taken one to two days later, empties the uterus. Both drugs are available as generics and are also used to treat other conditions.

The FDA last year lifted a long-standing requirement that women pick up abortion pills in person. Federal regulations now also allow mail delivery nationwide. Even so, 19 states have passed laws requiring a medical clinician to be physically present when abortion pills are administered to a patient.

South Dakota is among them, joining several states,



Bottles of the drug misoprostol sit on a table at the West Alabama Women's Center on Tuesday, March 15, 2022 in Tuscaloosa, Ala.
Associated Press

including Texas, Kentucky, Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee and Oklahoma, where Republicans have moved to further restrict access to abortion pills in recent months.

Those moves have spurred

online services that offer information on getting abortion pills and consultations to get a prescription. After the woman in South Dakota found that the state's only abortion clinic could not schedule her in time for

a medication abortion, she found an online service, called Just The Pill, that advised her to drive across to Minnesota for a phone consultation with a doctor. A week later, she came back to Minnesota for the pills.

She took the first one almost immediately in her car, then cried as she drove home.

"I felt like I lost a pregnancy," she said. "I love my husband and I love my children and I knew exactly what I had to say goodbye to and that was a really horrible thing to have to do."

Besides crossing state lines, women can also turn to international online pharmacies, said Greer Donley, a professor specializing in reproductive health care at the University of Pittsburgh Law School. Some women also are having prescribed pills forwarded through states without restrictions.

"It allows for someone to have an abortion without a direct role of a provider. It's going to be much harder for states to control abortion access," she said, adding, "The question is how is it going to be enforced?" Abortion law experts say it's an unsettled question whether states can restrict access to abortion pills in the wake of the FDA's decision.

"The general rule is that federal law preempts conflicting state law," said Laura Hermer, a professor at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota. "There is no question that the FDA has proper authority to regulate the drugs used in medication abortions. The question is whether a state can make a viable, winning argument that, for public health pur-

poses, it needs to further regulate access to the relevant medications."

Hermer said she doesn't think there is a valid public health reason because the published evidence is that the drugs are "exceptionally safe." But if the Supreme Court overrules Roe v. Wade and a state gives embryos and fetuses full rights as people "then all bets would be off."

The Planned Parenthood regional organization that includes South Dakota doesn't believe it can legally mail abortion pills to patients there.

Telemedicine providers have to abide by the laws of the state where the patient is, said Dr. Sarah Traxler, chief medical officer for Planned Parenthood North Central States in St. Paul. She acknowledged that some organizations disagree. "But," she added, "we don't feel like we have liberty to mail pills from Minnesota to other places in the country where it's illegal to provide medication abortion."

Sue Leibel, the state policy director for Susan B. Anthony List, a prominent organization opposed to abortion, acknowledged that medication abortions have "crept up" on Republican state lawmakers.

Leibel maintained women should not be prosecuted for seeking abortions, keeping with a long-standing principle of many abortion opponents. She suggested the next target for state enforcement should be the pharmacies, organizations and clinics that provide the abortion pills. She also said abortion-rights opponents should focus on electing a presidential candidate who would work to reverse the FDA's decision. □

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Biden to crack down on polluters in poor, minority areas

By MATTHEW DALY

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Following through on a campaign promise, the Biden administration on Thursday announced a wide-ranging enforcement strategy aimed at holding industrial polluters accountable for damage done to poor and minority communities.

The strategy includes creation of an Office of Environmental Justice within the Justice Department to focus on “fenceline communities” that have been exposed to air and water pollution from chemical plants, refineries and other industrial sites.

The plan also reinstates a dormant program that allowed fines paid by industry as part of a settlement go to river cleanup, health clinics or other programs that benefit the environment or public health. The program was used by presidents from both parties before being eliminated in the Trump administration.

“Although violations of our environmental laws can happen anywhere, communities of color, indigenous communities and low-income communities often bear the brunt of the harm caused by environmental crime, pollution and climate change,” Attorney General Merrick Garland said at a news conference. “And for far too long, these



Environmental Protection Agency administrator Michael Regan speaks alongside Attorney General Merrick Garland at a news conference to announce actions to enhance the Biden administration’s environmental justice efforts, Thursday, May 5, 2022, at the Department of Justice in Washington.

Associated Press

communities have faced barriers to accessing the justice they deserve,” he said. “No American should have to live, work or send their kids to school in a neighborhood that carries an unfair share of environmental hazards,” added Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta.

President Joe Biden had promised during the 2020 campaign that he would establish an environmental justice division within the Justice Department and elevate environmental justice issues in an all-of-gov-

ernment approach.

In a related development, the White House announced Thursday that advocate Jalonnie White-Newsome will lead environmental justice efforts at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. White-Newsome succeeds Cecilia Martinez, who stepped down in January.

White-Newsome, of Michigan, is founder and CEO of Empowering a Green Environment and Economy, a consulting firm focused on climate change, public health and environmental

and racial equity.

CEQ Chair Brenda Mallory called White-Newsome “a strong and effective champion for communities that have been overburdened by pollution and subjected to decades of environmental injustice.”

On enforcement, the strategy unveiled Thursday is intended to guide the work of employees throughout the Justice Department, including U.S. attorneys across the country who will begin a renewed focus on environmental justice issues, Garland and Gupta

said. The new office “will prioritize meaningful and constructive engagement with the communities most affected by environmental crime and injustice,” Garland said. “Whenever possible, these efforts will respond directly to community needs and concerns.” Environmental Protection Agency head Michael Regan said the “partnership” between his agency and the Justice Department “has never been stronger” and will ensure that the federal government does all it can “to protect overburdened and underserved communities across America.”

The strategy follows a series of enforcement actions announced by Regan in January to address air pollution, unsafe drinking water and other problems afflicting minority communities in three Gulf Coast states that Regan toured in November.

The plan includes unannounced inspections of chemical plants, refineries and other industrial sites and installation of air monitoring equipment in Louisiana’s “chemical corridor” to enhance enforcement at a series of chemical and plastics plants between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. The region contains several hotspots where cancer risks are far above national levels. □

U.S. Cyber Command team helps Lithuania protect its networks

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon’s cyber arm says a team spent months working with officials in Lithuania to help protect government networks there from cyberattacks.

The U.S. Cyber Command mission, known as a hunt forward operation, involved a specialized team that worked side-by-side with Lithuanian officials to identify vulnerabilities and root out any malicious cyber activity on the networks of the country’s foreign affairs ministry and defense systems. It ended this month.

The three-month operation coincided with Russia’s war against Ukraine and was part of an ongoing effort by the Cyber Command to work with foreign governments that want help protecting their networks.

In the last several years, the Cyber National Mission Force has conducted 28 hunt forward operations in 16 countries, including Estonia, Ukraine, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

“These were countries that had asked for our assistance, deploying our defensive teams forward, be-

ing able to identify malware and tradecraft our adversaries were using, and then sharing that broadly with a commercial provider,” Gen. Paul Nakasone, the head of the Cyber Command, said Wednesday in describing the operations. The start of the Lithuania operation predated the Russia-Ukraine war, which was launched by Russia on Feb. 24 and has involved persistent hacking by Russian forces though caused ultimately less damage than many observers had anticipated. □



U.S. Cyber Command head, National Security Agency Director and Central Security Service Chief Gen. Paul Nakasone attends a Senate Armed Services hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, April 5, 2022.

Associated Press

Thousands of smartphones purchased by VA went unused

By **MICHAEL CASEY**
Associated Press

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs wasted nearly \$2 million when most of the smartphones bought during the pandemic for homeless veterans went unused, according to an inspector general's report. The report, released Wednesday, found that the Veterans Health Administration spent nearly \$7 million to purchase 10,000 phones with unlimited prepaid calling plans but that 85% of the phones gathered dust. As a result, it lost \$1.8 million in wasted data plan costs. The inspector general also found that \$571,000 was wasted on data plans due to poor oversight of its purchase of nearly 81,000 iPads. The smartphones and iPads were purchased as part of the efforts to increase homeless veterans' access to telehealth, a program that saw video visits increase from about 2,500 in February 2020 to 38,000 in September 2020. The veterans were enrolled in a Department of Housing and Urban Development VA Supportive housing program. The inspector general



Smart phones are displayed at a shopping mall in Pittsburgh, Feb. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

concluded that Veterans Health Administration officials, who were part of the Connected Care program, made a good faith effort to help veterans get smartphones. But they found there was a "lack of information for officials to be able to determine the quantity needed for the targeted veteran population." The inspector general recommended improvements in the storage of smart-

phones and tablets. It called for the VA to "establish a realistic goal for days in storage along with a process for closely monitoring days in storage for each data plan provider and taking corrective actions when the goal is not being met." It also called for a cost-benefit analysis, in coordination with contractors, to create a process that starts the data plan charges only after the device has been issued to

a veteran. In the case of the iPads, Connected Care officials purchased 80,930 with prepaid data plans for around \$63 million. But these iPads remained in storage on average for 17 days, the inspector general found, which ended up costing the VA more than \$571,000 in wasted data plans. "Officials could reduce wasted data plan costs by establishing a realistic goal

for days in storage, closely monitoring days in storage for devices with each type of data plan, and then taking corrective actions when necessary," the report said. The VA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But in the report, the VA's undersecretary for health concurred with the recommendations. The agency said it plans to work with its Denver Logistics Center to analyze inventory, tablet use and shipments over the past year. It then will propose guidelines for how long a device should be in storage, a system to monitor that and corrective actions when storage goals are not met. It also plans to consider a new process that either will launch data plans when devices are issued or consider other ways that data plan costs can be reduced. The VA said the Connected Care program was also transferring excess loaner iPhones to the Veterans Health Administration Homeless Program Office, so that coordinators could provide an iPhone to any veteran lacking stable housing and needing a device. □



In this Monday, July 16, 2018 photo, a group in military fatigues walks in front of Jackman Hall, rear, on the campus of Norwich University in Northfield, Vt.

Associated Press

By **PHILIP MARCELO**
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A military college student who says he was removed from his duties for testing positive for HIV is suing state and federal military officials. The 20-year-old student from Revere, Massachusetts, says in a complaint filed Thursday that he test-

ed positive for HIV in October 2020 during his sophomore year at the nation's oldest private military college, Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont. The student, who is identified in the lawsuit only as "John Doe," said in the complaint filed in federal court in Burlington, Vermont, that he was deemed

Military college student sues armed forces over HIV policy

unfit for service and dropped from the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and the Vermont Army National Guard despite being healthy, asymptomatic and on a treatment regimen that renders his viral load undetectable. The U.S. Department of Defense and the Vermont National Guard, which are among those named in the lawsuit, didn't respond to emails seeking comment Thursday. Lawyers for Civil Rights, a Boston-based group that filed the lawsuit on the student's behalf, declined to provide copies of the student's separation notice and other discharge documents, saying they're unredacted and will be submitted under seal to the

court. But the lawsuit describes in some detail the circumstances around the dismissals, including that the student was informed he would not be able to get a scholarship or contract through the ROTC program due to his HIV status and that he was no longer allowed to continue his monthly training periods with the state National Guard. Under Department of Defense regulations, HIV is among a lengthy list of medical conditions that automatically disqualify a person from enlisting, being appointed as a commissioned officer and enrollment as an ROTC scholarship cadet. The student's lawyers argue the military's HIV policies

date to the 1980s when little was known about the condition, which, if left untreated, can lead to AIDS. "A generation after they were first developed, the military's policies are highly anachronistic and fail to reflect current medical reality," the Lawyers for Civil Rights organization argues in the lawsuit. "Advances in medical treatment and prevention have transformed HIV from a progressive, terminal disease to a manageable condition." A federal judge in Virginia ruled last month that service members who are HIV-positive cannot be discharged or barred from becoming an officer solely because they're infected with the virus. □

Catalan: Spain spy chief admits legally hacking some phones

By JOSEPH WILSON

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) —

A leading Catalan separatist politician said Thursday that Spain's top intelligence official acknowledged that her agency had hacked into the cellphones of "some" of the dozens of politicians reported to be targeted by spyware but she said it had proper judicial authorization.

Gabriel Rufián, member of a Catalan pro-independence party, spoke after he participated in a closed-door meeting with the director of Spain's National Intelligence Center, CNI, along with a select group of Spanish lawmakers.

A recent report by the Canadian-based digital rights group Citizen Lab on the use of the controversial Pegasus spyware in Spain said dozens of pro-independence supporters in Spain's northeastern Catalonia region were spied upon using the software.

When asked by The Associated Press, Spain's Defense Ministry, which is in charge of the CNI, refused to comment on the meeting with CNI director Paz Esteban because its contents are considered classified. Leading Spanish media, however, also reported that the director had shown committee members court authorizations for hacking the cellphones of some Catalan separatists.



Spain's Premier Pedro Sanchez speaks during a joint news conference with Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen at the Moncloa Palace in Madrid, Spain, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022.

Associated Press

"They (the CNI) admit to the spying, but say that it was carried out against far fewer people than those cited by Citizen Lab," Rufián said. As for the rest of the over 60 politicians, lawyers and activists cited as hacking targets by Citizen Lab, Rufián said the CNI director "point(ed) to two possibilities: One, that it was a foreign country; or two, state agencies that are spying beyond their legal limits." The highly anticipated meeting took place at Spain's Parliament building in Madrid.

The Catalan separatists, who want to carve out a new state in northeastern

Spain around Barcelona, had directly accused the CNI of being behind the hacks that came to light two weeks ago when the Citizen Lab report was released. Spain's government has repeatedly said the CNI cannot tap phones without prior judicial authorization. At the same time, the government said the secrecy law shielding all CNI activities prevents the agency from confirming whether it possesses Pegasus, the spyware sold by Israeli company NSO Group. While representatives from Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's Socialist party and the opposition Popular

Party emerged from Thursday's meeting saying they were satisfied by Esteban's explanations, Rufián was not alone in demanding further action.

"We insist that the information that we received today be declassified for the public to know, since it affects fundamental rights," said Albert Botran, who is among the politicians that Citizen Lab said was spied upon. The Spanish government has promised that both CNI and the nation's ombudsman will investigate the Citizen Lab report. Amnesty International, which has denounced the use of the Pegasus spyware

in several countries, on Thursday demanded more transparency from Spain.

"This committee, characterized for its secrecy and obscurantism, cannot be considered the appropriate venue to investigate the alleged violence of human rights," said Esteban Beltrán, Amnesty's director in Spain.

In addition to the Catalan hacking case, Spain's intelligence agency is facing an uncomfortable spotlight due to another case of Pegasus hacking. Earlier this week, Spain announced that the cellphones of both Sánchez, the prime minister, and Defense Minister Margarita Robles were infected last year with Pegasus spyware.

Although Spain has refused to point a finger at Morocco, the dates the phones of Sánchez and Robles were hacked last year match up with a diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

Amid the back-to-back scandals, plans for a public ceremony to observe CNI's 20th anniversary were postponed. Robles has encouraged the Catalans to take their hacking case to court, just like the Spanish government has, to determine who is responsible.

"Only the judiciary can determine who is responsible," Robles said Thursday. "We can only take our cases to court, and in the meantime refrain from accusations." □

Chanel jewelry boutique in Paris held up by armed men

PARIS (AP) — A group of armed men held up a Chanel jewelry boutique in Paris in broad daylight Thursday and escaped on two motorcycles.

The estimated value of the goods stolen from the store, which specializes in high-end watches and fine jewelry, was not immediately known. The police prefecture tweeted that members of a special brigade went to the scene after the heist, which occurred close to 3 p.m. The boutique on rue de la Paix, not far from the French capital's opera

house, has been standing in for a Chanel shop on the posh Place Vendôme that is undergoing renovation.

A video circulating on social media of what appeared to be the heist showed four men dressed in black and with their faces covered escaping on two motorcycles. Three of them had been in the store while one stood guard with what looked like an automatic rifle strapped across him.

Le Parisien newspaper quoted a supervisor at a nearby store, Cyril Ngo, as

saying that passers-by did not notice the weapon or understand what was going on. He said the robbery took about 10 minutes.

Heists of Paris boutiques selling jewelry and watches are not uncommon.

Seven thieves carried out a dramatic heist in September at a Bulgari shop on Place Vendôme, stealing millions of euros worth of jewels. Police chased suspects on two motorcycles and in a car through Paris. Two suspects were quickly arrested, one shot in the leg by police. □



Police officers cordon off the area after a hold-up in a Chanel boutique Thursday, May 5, 2022 in Paris.

Associated Press

Israel upholds expulsion order against West Bank hamlets

By **JOSEPH KRAUSS**

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's Supreme Court has upheld a long-standing expulsion order against eight Palestinian hamlets in the occupied West Bank, potentially leaving at least 1,000 people homeless, an Israeli rights group representing the villagers said Thursday. The verdict, issued late Wednesday as Israel largely shut down for its Independence Day, marks the end of a more than two-decade legal struggle by Palestinians in the Masafer Yatta region of the southern West Bank to maintain communities they say go back decades.

"Without warning in the middle of the night, the Israeli High Court of Justice published a verdict with unprecedented consequences," the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, which has represented the residents throughout the process, said in a statement. "The High Court has officially authorized leaving entire families, with their children and their elderly, without a roof over their



A stockyard that suffered damage following a settlers' attack from nearby settlement outposts on the Bedouin community, in the West Bank village of al-Mufagara, near Hebron, Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021.

Associated Press

heads," it said.

Roni Pelli, an attorney at the association, said the verdict is final and it's not clear if there are any further legal steps that can be taken. The forcible displacement of the communities could happen at any time, she told The Associated Press.

The military declared the

area a firing and training zone in the early 1980s. Israeli authorities have argued that the residents only used the area for seasonal agriculture and had no permanent structures there at the time. In November 1999, security forces expelled some 700 villagers and destroyed homes and cisterns, the association

said. The legal battle began the following year.

In its ruling late Wednesday, the Supreme Court sided with the state and said the villagers had rejected a compromise that would have allowed them to enter the area at certain times and practice agriculture for part of the year.

The military said the ruling

had confirmed "that the firing zone was duly declared in accordance with the Military Commander's authority, due to military and security needs."

The families say they have been there for decades, from long before Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war. They practice a traditional form of desert agriculture and animal herding, with some living in caves at least part of the year, but say their only homes are in the hard-scrabble communities now at risk of demolition.

"The occupation court just decided: My community will be destroyed," tweeted Basel Adra, a prominent activist from the area. "The army can now place us on trucks, 2,400 people, and expel us from our ancient villages, one by one."

The West Bank has been under Israeli military rule for nearly 55 years. Masafer Yatta is in the 60% of the territory where the Palestinian Authority is prohibited from operating. The Palestinians want the West Bank to form the main part of their future state. □

Sandstorm suspends flights, many Iraqis struggle to breathe

By **SAMYA KULLAB**

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Hundreds of Iraqis rushed to hospitals with breathing problems Thursday and the Baghdad airport suspended flights for several hours as a thick

sandstorm blanketed the country, the fifth to engulf Iraq within a month.

Iraqi state media said most of the patients suffered respiratory issues as clinics across the country's north and west struggled to keep

up with the influx. Authorities urged citizens to stay indoors. Iraqis awoke to an ochre-colored sky and a thick blanket of dust covered the roads and buildings with an orange film. Visibility was low and drivers kept car headlights on to see the road.

Flights scheduled to depart overnight and on Thursday morning were postponed, an airport official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters. Flights resumed by the afternoon, when the dust began to clear.

Iraq is prone to seasonal sandstorms but experts and officials are raising alarm over their frequency in recent years, which they say is exacerbated by record-low rainfall, desertification

and climate change.

However, Azzam Alwash, head of the Nature Iraq non-profit organization, warned that "climate change alone doesn't give the whole picture" and that inappropriate farming practices and mismanagement of water resources have contributed to the problems. Climate change has become a very convenient excuse for officials to avoid responsibility for not taking action over the last 20 to 40 years," he said. Desertification, resulting from old irrigation practices dating back to the Sumerian age, and rising water salinity are also factors, he said. "These are policy issues."

The World Bank has warned that Iraq could suffer a 20% drop in water resources by 2050.

Issa al-Fayad, an official with the Environment Ministry, said Iraq could face 272 days of sandstorms a year in the coming decades.

At least 700 people sought medical care in Iraq's western province of Anbar, and dozens more in the provinces of Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Najaf, state TV reported.

At the Sheikh Zayed Hospital in Baghdad, people lined up outside the emergency room and staff stocked up on more meds as weather forecasts predicted the storms would continue throughout May. Ayat Haitham, a nurse, was busy treating patients but also tried to reassure them that all the drugs used for treating breathing difficulties and also oxygen were "available in big quantities." □



A man walks through a sand storm in Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, May 5, 2022.

Associated Press

Colombia extradites feared head of Gulf Clan to U.S.

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) —

Colombia extradited the alleged head of the feared Gulf Clan, who had been the country's most wanted drug lord before his capture, to the United States Wednesday where he faces indictments in three federal courts.

Colombian President Iván Duque said Dairo Antonio Úsuga David is "comparable only to Pablo Escobar," referring to the late former head of the Medellín drug cartel.

"He is not only the most dangerous drug trafficker in the world, but he is murderer of social leaders, abuser of boys, girls and adolescents, a murderer of policemen," Duque said accompanied by Colombia's military leaders whom he congratulated for guarding Úsuga David and capturing him in October 2021. The former rural warlord, better known by his alias Otoniel, had stayed on the run for more than a decade by corrupting state officials and aligning himself with combatants on the left and right.



In this photo released by the Colombian Presidential Press Office, police fingerprint Dairo Antonio Úsuga, also known as "Otoniel," leader of the violent Clan del Golfo cartel prior to his extradition to the U.S., at a military airport in Bogotá, Colombia, Wednesday, May 4, 2022.

He was transferred Wednesday in handcuffs and wearing a helmet and a bulletproof vest from a prison in Bogotá to a heavily guarded military transport air field.

He's long been a fixture on the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's most-wanted list.

He was first indicted in 2009, in Manhattan federal court, on narcotics charges and

for allegedly providing assistance to a far-right paramilitary group designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. Later indictments in Brooklyn and Miami federal courts accused him of importing into the U.S. at least 73 metric tons of cocaine between 2003 and 2014 through countries including Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, and Honduras.

Úsuga David's also cycled through the ranks of several guerrilla groups, most recently claiming to lead the Gaitanist Self Defense Forces of Colombia, after a mid-20th century Colombian leftist firebrand.

The Colombian government began the capo's extradition after the State Council lifted a provisional suspension of an order by Duque endorsing the

move. The high court dismissed a petition from a group of Úsuga David's victims who argued that his extradition would violate their rights to justice and reparation. They wanted him to first face the more than 128 proceedings against him in Colombia.

Duque said that from the United States, Úsuga would continue collaborating with the Colombian authorities in the investigations against him and once he completes his sentences for drug trafficking, he will return to "Colombia to pay for the crimes he committed."

The Gulf Clan's army of assassins terrorized much of northern Colombia to gain control of major cocaine smuggling routes through thick jungles north to Central America and onto the U.S.

As he defied authorities for years, his legend as a bandit grew alongside the horror stories told by Colombian authorities of the many underage women he and his cohorts allegedly abused sexually. □

U.S. resumes limited visa processing in Cuba after 4 years

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — The U.S. Embassy in Havana has resumed processing visas for Cubans, though on a limited basis, more than four years after stopping

consular services on the island amid a hardening of relations. The resumption comes as the number of Cubans trying to emigrate illegally to United States surges. A State Department official on Wednesday told

The Associated Press that for the time being U.S. officials in Havana will only process visa requests from Cubans who are the parents of U.S. citizens, under a category known as IR-5, and that the Biden administration in the future will evaluate expanding the services to others. The official, who was not authorized to be quoted by name, said the U.S. government decided to process only visa requests from this group because of "the unique age, health, and mobility challenges for this category of applicants." Any other applicants should apply for visas through the U.S. Embassy in Guyana, as they've done since 2018, when the administration of former President Donald Trump withdrew embassy staff from Havana. □



People wait their turns outside the U.S. embassy the day after it reopened its consular services in Havana, Cuba, Wednesday, May 4, 2022.

Associated Press

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Bowls Noodle Bar invites you to a Happy Hour with a unique flavor



Bowls Noodle Bar recently opened at their new location at The Village, near the High Rise Hotels. To celebrate, they are launching their new Happy Hour from 9pm to 11pm every day.

Before the pandemic, Bowls Noodle Bar opened at the Hyatt by the airport, and was in the process of opening a second location at The Village when the pandemic hit. Due to the consequences of the pandemic, they decided to close the restaurant by the airport and open their new location at The Village. Their new location has been open for about six months to great results.

At The Village, night time is the best time. This is why they are now offering a daily Happy Hour, from 9pm to 11pm. It includes \$3 beer and \$5 cocktails.

Their cocktails are made in-house with a unique fusion of Asian flavors, for example, the popular purple Ube Mojito, with the flavor of traditional Ube, a Japanese dessert; the Blue Samurai with ginger flavor; and the refreshing Fruity Blossoms, with a flavor encompassing the Sakura, the famous Japanese Cherry Blossoms. You can try all these for only \$5 each during Happy Hour.

Fusion is at the core of the unique flavors of Bowls Noodle Bar, and this is expressed beautifully



fully in their traditional Japanese soups. They are the only restaurant in Aruba that has most of the noodles traditionally used, Udon, Ramen, and Rice noodles. Ramen noodles, served fresh, are a surprising flavor for those who are used to dried ramen noodles. They also have Jasmine rice for the rice bowls.

Their authentic soups are the highlight and star. Chef Warren explains that there are four main components to the soup: the broth, the noodles, tare, and the oil, and these are very important for the traditional Japanese soups. At Bowls Noodle Bar, they have a wide variety of flavors to cater to every taste, like the famous Pork Chashu. It comes with fresh ramen noodles, and it's the pride of Bowls Noodle Bar. Chef Warren says that the broth for this soup takes two to three days to make, and is made in-house, with fresh and delicious ingredients. They also cater to vegetarians and vegans,

with various options on the menu like tofu mushroom soup, vegetable gyoza, wonton, and fresh kimchi fermented at the restaurant.

The wok concept also allows you to create your own unique dish, choosing your base, protein, vegetables and sauce.

Origin

The founders of Bowls Noodle Bar, Dexter Moreno and his partner Lai, opened their first location on Curaçao. They traveled to Japan to study Japanese Cuisine, and they fell in love with Japanese soup. Lai's parents are Chinese, and this is the start of the Asian-fusion flavors that are both surprising and delectable, combining Japanese, Chinese and even some Korean cuisine. Chef Warren was trained in these traditional flavors by the founders themselves.

They came to Aruba where Dexter approached some ex-colleagues in the industry to open a location on the island, and with a local team, opened Bowls Noodle Bar Aruba with a more extensive menu.

Serving a variety of Japanese soups. Choose from fresh ramen, udon, and rice noodles. Served in Soups and Stir Fry.

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Seatrade Cruise Convention



ORANJESTAD – In April of 2022, the Minister of Tourism and Public Health, Mr. Dangui Oduber, traveled to Miami with a delegation to attend the Seatrade Cruise Convention.

This convention is the largest in the world. It did not take place the last two years due to the pandemic.

The presence of the Aruban delegation is significant considering the opportunity to showcase Aruba to the world during this convention to major cruise lines and all countries present.

Aruba has a booth to showcase our island to the world of cruise tourism. The Aruban delegation consists of the Minister of Tourism Dangui Oduber, ATA CEO Ronella Croes, APA CEO Marc Figaroa, and the ATA Cruise Manager Mario Arends.

The Minister has attended different meetings during this week's visit. It includes meetings with the Carnival Cruise Lines, Royal Caribbean Cruises, MSC Cruises, and other cruises lines. The Minister also met with the Minister of Tourism of the Dominican Republic, Minister of Tourism of Curacao and the authorities of the Jacksonville Port Authority. These meetings are essential for the development of our cruise tourism.

Cruise Tourism remains essential for the Aruban economy. The pandemic caused a considerable delay in this industry but is slowly recovering. During the convention they proved that even though Aruba is in the "deep south" on the cruise route, it remains an attractive and popular destination. □



"Safe Barrios" launched in collaboration with CEDE Aruba

ORANJESTAD - The Minister of Justice and Social Affairs, Mr. Rocco Tjon, recently met with CEDE Aruba to discuss the "Safe Barrios" project.

Parliament approved this

project in the 2022 national budget to offer more to young people in the neighborhoods. The minister considers this investment essential because it is done precisely in prevention.

A recent survey on the quality of life of young people shows an urgent need for activities for young people to keep them on track. That is why it is so important to invest sustainably in the neighborhoods. These investments should make these areas less attractive to all forms of crime and offer a unique opportunity to transform them into places offering opportunities to young people and the community.

CEDE Aruba, and the Minister of Justice are carrying out this project, which aims to transform the community centers. The minister has the cooperation of 3 other



ministries; the Ministry of Sports and Education, the Ministry of Labor, Integration, and Energy, and the Ministry of Integrity, Nature, Transport, and Elderly Care.

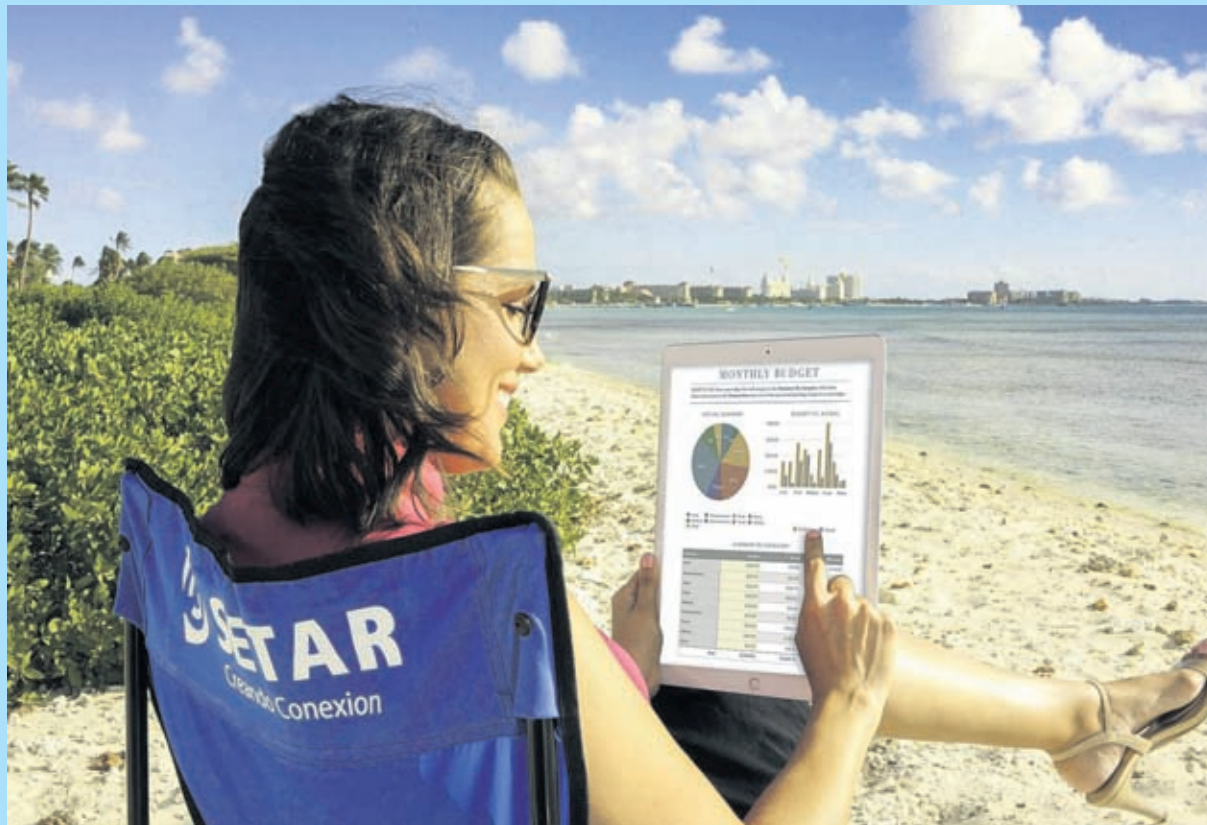
As part of this project, the sports facilities and recreational parks for young people, will undergo proper maintenance. They will install better lighting, and

traffic will be made safer. Several after-school programs will be available.

The various ministries and other partners who play an essential role in safeguarding the long-term trajectory of this project will soon sign an MOU. The timeline has been established and will be presented to all community centers end April. □



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FESTIVAL**

For the kids of Casa Cuna

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& KIDS CORNER**

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Mainstreet Oranjestad
From 7pm to 11pm
Entrance fee: A donation
from your heart






Truck For A Cause

We are students at the University of Aruba, attending the faculty of Hospitality Tourism Management Studies (FHT-MS).

The FHTMS aims to create both educated and community conscious professionals. For the 'Meeting, incentives, conferences and exhibitions' (MICE), the admirable task was assigned to organize an event to raise funds for a non-profit organization of choice. Therefore, the event "Foodie Festival" we organized for our non-profit organization of choice Stichting Casa Cuna progreso.

This Saturday, from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., the event will take place at Plaza Nicky Habibe. Where all the food trucks will sell their famous meals.

The entrance fee is a monetary donation from your heart, which can be as little as 5 cents depending on your desire. We also have raffle tickets for sale for Afl.10 in order to raise funds for the event.

That is why we want to invite the Aruban community and our visitors to come and have fun while supporting a good cause. ☐



Small businesses still struggle to find enough workers

By MAE ANDERSON

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Some small businesses are still struggling to hire qualified workers, even as Americans return to the U.S. job market in droves.

Hiring and retaining employees remains the top challenge for small businesses, according to a survey of 1,100 businesses by Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business Voices out last week. Ninety percent of businesses that are hiring are finding it difficult to recruit qualified candidates for open positions.

In general, the U.S. job market is sizzling. An unexpectedly strong recovery from the brief but devastating coronavirus recession left companies scrambling to recall workers they had laid off in the spring of 2020 and to find new ones. Over the past year, U.S. employers have added an average of more than 540,000 jobs a month. The Labor Department is expected to report Friday that employers hired another 396,000 last month, according to FactSet.

But small business owners believe the job market is a tale of two recoveries. Eighty-eight percent of respondents in the Goldman Sachs survey say small businesses are struggling relative to larger companies in their local communities. Forty-two percent say they have lost employees to larger businesses that are paying more.

"Small businesses are struggling to compete with larger employers on pay and benefits and cite a lack of qualified workers," said Joe Wall, National Director of Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Voices.

Data from payroll processing firm ADP show a widening gap in hiring between businesses with 500 or more employees and businesses with less than 50 staffers. Those smaller businesses have lost jobs in three of the past four months.

In March, employers advertised a record 11.5 million job openings. The United States now has two job openings for every unem-



Shirley Hughes, owner of Sweet Cheats bakery, poses for a photo, Friday, April 15, 2022, in Atlanta. Associated Press

ployed person. But a large number of smaller businesses say they're having trouble getting candidates to even apply for openings, particularly in the hard-hit leisure and hospitality industry. Owners are taking on more work themselves and improvising other ways to get by.

"I'm worried about burnout. ... It's frustrating, very frustrating," said Shirley Hughes, owner of Sweet Cheats bakery in Atlanta. Sweet Cheats had nine staffers at the pre-pandemic peak. Now Hughes has two plus herself. She's curtailed business hours — closing time has gone from 8:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. and now 4 p.m. — giving her and her two bakers more time in the kitchen. Still, Hughes says she now works 80 to 90 hours a week.

Inflation is another challenge. Higher expenses not only hurt businesses' bottom lines, but also affect how well they can retain and attract workers. Before the pandemic, Hughes would get hundreds of applicants for openings. Now, she says she's lucky to get one or two, and they tend to want \$18 or \$20 an hour,

when she offers \$14 or \$15 for experienced bakers. Hughes has had to add benefits for her two long-time staffers to hang onto them.

Teresa Depola is also taking on more work herself because of a lack of available help. She opened Betty Bops Diner in Albany, New York, 10 years ago, with her husband and son, and kept running it after she and her husband divorced.

While she ideally would have three staffers to run the place, lately she's been a one-person workforce: cooking, waitressing, and even running deliveries.

"It's small enough so I can do it myself, it's not bad," she said. Still, she would like to add some staff so she could serve dinner again. She's been serving breakfast and lunch only and closing at 3 p.m. since the pandemic started. And she doesn't see the job picture improving anytime soon.

"I don't think it's going to change for a while," she said. "I'm going to keep it the way it is right now, people are not willing to work just yet. I'm still having a lot of trouble finding staff."

While most major U.S. in-

dustries have regained the jobs lost to the pandemic, employment in leisure and hospitality is down by 1.5 million, or 8.7%, since February 2020, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Many in the industry faced burnout after being on the front lines during two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, said Rob Wilson, president of human resources provider Employco. Some who stayed in the industry switched to larger restaurants where wages might be higher. Others left and looked into new opportunities. "There's nobody to hire, there's nobody out there looking for jobs," said Anesh Bodasing, who opened Tiffin Box, a fast-casual Indian restaurant in West Palm Beach, Florida, in 2019 with 20 staffers.

Last year in April 2021, Bodasing temporarily opened a second location in a food hall. But then the staffing shortage began to hit home. "Your standard of employee went down and pay you're paying people went up. From an employers' standpoint, that's the wrong equation," he said. Bodasing shuttered the food hall stall and is down

to three staffers at the West Palm Beach location. He is considering changing the business to use less staffers.

"Let's assume the employment shortage is not going to change," Bodasing said. "You can sit around and struggle or pivot and change the business in a way that will get us ahead even during the shortage." One option is to replace the cashier position with an automated kiosk, which lets customers order and pay. Another possibility: introducing meal plans, where customers order a minimum of five meals in advance that they can eat or freeze.

"You just have to think outside the box; literally nothing is off the table," he said. Matt Ensero, founder of Wing it On! chicken restaurants, faced the challenge of keeping a full staff of 35 employees at the company's two corporate restaurants in Waterbury, Connecticut, and Raleigh, North Carolina. (The chain also has nine franchise locations with more in development.)

"We thought, this is pervasive across our industry, we have to change our strategy," he said. Ensero realized he was competing with other restaurants just to get applicants in the door — people would schedule an interview and then not show up 90% of the time. So, the chain started offering people a free lunch or dinner if they showed up. The ratio "flip-flopped" he said, and most applicants came for the interview.

Meanwhile, at the Raleigh location, which is near North Carolina State University, the company started offering scholarships to workers: \$1,000 if they worked for a full year, or \$500 if they worked one semester. The program was a success, and the company plans to increase the amount for full-year workers to \$2,000 next year.

"It's not something that's a foregone conclusion anymore that you can put up an ad and people will walk through the door, and you hire them," Ensero said. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 43 Print units
 - 1 Bigwig
 - 6 Uneasy state
 - 11 Skateboarding jump
 - 12 Sorceress of myth
 - 13 Quake locale
 - 14 Indian, e.g.
 - 15 Employ
 - 16 Chatty folks
 - 18 Runner on snow
 - 19 "Hooray!"
 - 20 Originally called
 - 21 Rational
 - 23 Hearty dishes
 - 25 Hamilton's bill
 - 27 Bulldog backer
 - 28 Lover of Daphnis
 - 30 Sirius, for one
 - 33 "Golly!"
 - 34 Diner sandwich
 - 36 Shade
 - 37 Hay crop
 - 39 Scroll-work shape
 - 40 Past its best
 - 41 Ship of 1492

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DOWN Yesterday's answer

- 1 Simple to prepare, in ads
- 2 Denali setting
- 3 Exasperated
- 4 Engine need
- 5 Gerald's wife
- 6 Church aide
- 7 Shaving mishap
- 8 Jealous
- 9 Alarms
- 10 Keyed up
- 17 — in "apple"
- 22 Snaky swimmer
- 24 Golfer Ernie
- 26 Most honorable
- 28 Boston cager
- 29 Pole worker
- 31 Lone Star capital
- 32 Lot deal
- 33 Surprised sounds
- 35 Spanish snacks
- 38 Country music's Jackson
- 42 QB's mistake

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45					46				

5-6

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-6 CRYPTOQUOTE

H Y C U G P C R M I M H V D V Q

Z O G L R K D R E M G O X K D W C

T C D P D T C T L C Y . — F Y M G Z K M

T D Y A

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IF I HAD TO LIVE MY LIFE AGAIN, I'D MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES, ONLY SOONER. — TALLULAH BANKHEAD



Health workers and relatives carry the body of a COVID-19 victim for cremation in Jammu, India, Sunday, April 25, 2021.

Associated Press

WHO: Nearly 15 million deaths associated with COVID-19

By MARIA CHENG
AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization estimates that nearly 15 million people were killed either by coronavirus or by its impact on overwhelmed health systems during the first two years of the pandemic, more than double the current official death toll of over 6 million.

Most of the deaths occurred in Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas, according to a WHO report issued Thursday.

The U.N. health agency's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, described the newly calculated figure as "sobering," saying it should prompt countries to invest more in their capacities to quell future health emergencies.

WHO tasked scientists with determining the actual number of COVID-19 deaths between January 2020 and the end of last year. They estimated that between 13.3 million and 16.6 million people died either due to the coronavirus directly or because of factors somehow attributed to the pandemic's impact on health systems, such as cancer patients who were unable to seek treatment when hospitals were full of COVID patients.

Based on that range, the scientists came up with an approximated total of 14.9 million.

The estimate was based on country-reported data and statistical modeling, but only about half of countries provided information. WHO said it wasn't yet able to break down the data to distinguish between direct deaths from COVID-19 and those related to effects of the pandemic, but the agency plans a future project examining death certificates.

"This may seem like just a bean-counting

exercise, but having these WHO numbers is so critical to understanding how we should combat future pandemics and continue to respond to this one," said Dr. Albert Ko, an infectious diseases specialist at the Yale School of Public Health who was not linked to the WHO research.

For example, Ko said, South Korea's decision to invest heavily in public health after it suffered a severe outbreak of MERS allowed it to escape COVID-19 with a per-capita death rate around a 20th of the one in the United States.

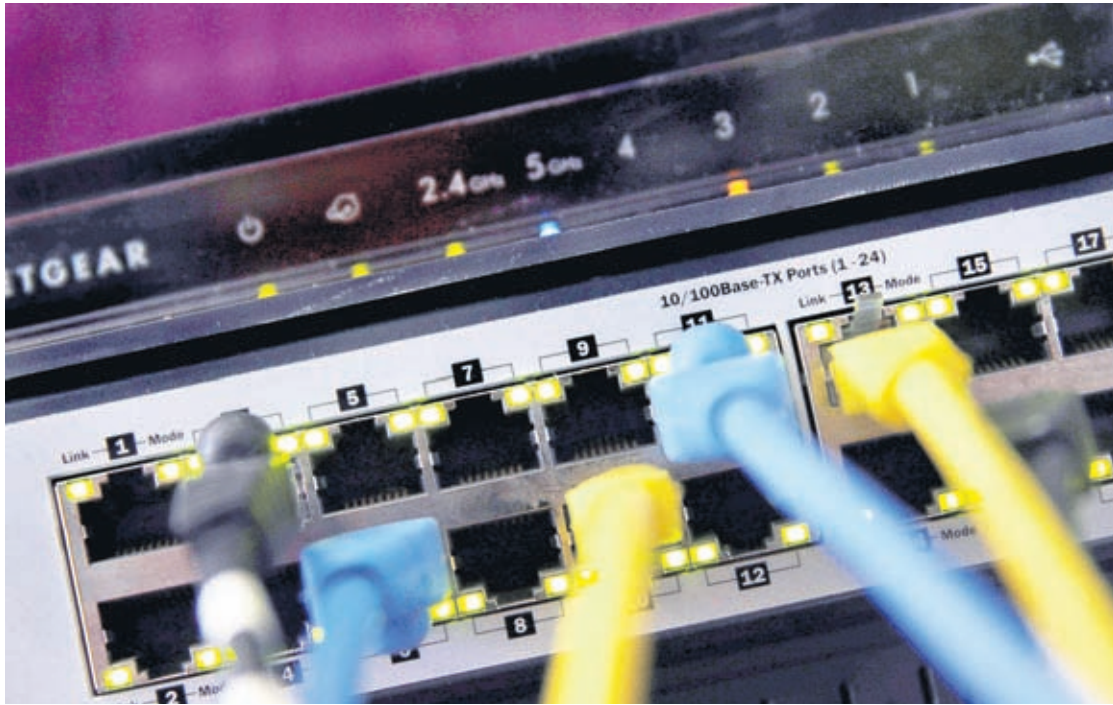
Accurately counting COVID-19 deaths has been problematic throughout the pandemic, as reports of confirmed cases represent only a fraction of the devastation wrought by the virus, largely because of limited testing. Government figures reported to WHO and a separate tally kept by Johns Hopkins University show more than 6.2 million reported virus deaths to date.

Scientists at the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington calculated for a recent study published in the journal *Lancet* that there were more than 18 million COVID deaths from January 2020 to December 2021.

A team led by Canadian researchers estimated there were more than 3 million uncounted coronavirus deaths in India alone. WHO's new analysis estimated that missed deaths in India alone ranged between 3.3 million to 6.5 million.

In a statement following the release of WHO's data, India disputed the U.N. agency's methodology. India's Health and Family Welfare Ministry called the analysis and data collection methods "questionable" and complained that the new death estimates were released "without adequately addressing India's concerns."

Telecom groups end fight against California net neutrality



A home router and internet switch are displayed on June 19, 2018, in East Derry, N.H.

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— Telecommunications industry groups on Wednesday ended their bid to block California's net neutrality law that prevents broadband providers from throttling service.

In a federal court filing in Sacramento, the groups and California Attorney General Rob Bonta jointly agreed to dismiss the case. The move followed a January decision by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allowing enforcement of the 2018 law, which bans internet providers from slowing down or blocking access to websites and applications that don't pay for premium service.

"The case is finally over," Bonta said in a statement. "With this victory, we've secured a free and open

internet for California's 40 million residents once and for all."

Messages seeking comment from an attorney representing the groups weren't immediately returned.

The law was signed by former Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown after regulators during the Trump administration killed federal net neutrality rules designed to prevent AT&T, Comcast, Verizon and other major internet providers from exploiting their dominance to favor certain services or apps over others.

In response, seven states and Puerto Rico enacted

their own net neutrality policies. The most expansive effort was in California, which started enforcing the law last year, with potentially significant consequences for the rest of the U.S.

In addition to barring internet providers from throttling service or charging companies like Netflix for a faster route to customers, the California law banned some forms of "zero rating" a term for when a cable or phone company exempts a service from data caps. Net-neutrality advocates say such programs undermine competition by potentially tilting users to the

sponsored app and away from rivals.

Big telecom companies fought the measure fiercely in court. They argued that the regulations can undermine investment in broadband and introduce uncertainty about what were acceptable business practices.

The Trump administration sued to block California's 2018 law, preventing it from taking effect for years, but the Biden administration dropped that lawsuit. □



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San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
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San Nicolas:

Centro Medico Tel. 584 5794

OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002

Urgent Care 586 0448

Walk-In Doctor's Clinic

+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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Narcotics Anonymous
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Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

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Movies love a comeback story. This summer, it's their turn.



This combination of photos shows poster art for upcoming films, top row from left, "Benediction," "Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers," "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," "Downton Abbey: A New Era," "Elvis," "Fire Island," "Firestarter," "Happening," "Jurassic World Dominion," "Lightyear," bottom row from left, "Marcel the Shell with Shoes On," "Minions: The Rise of Gru," "Nope," "Paws of Fury," "Senior Year," "DC League of Super Pets," "Thor: Love and Thunder," "Top Gun: Maverick," "Watcher," and "Where the Crawdads Sing."

(Roadside Attractions, top row from left, Disney+, Marvel Studios, Focus Features, Warner Bros., Hulu/Searchlight Pictures, Universal, IFC Films, Universal, Disney, top row from left, A24 Films, Universal, Universal, Paramount, Netflix, Warner Bros., Marvel Studios, Paramount, IFC Films and Sony Pictures via Associated Press)

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

This summer at the movies, Tom Cruise is back in the cockpit behind those iconic aviators. Doctors Grant, Sattler and Ian Malcolm are returning for another round with the dinosaurs. Natalie Portman is picking up Thor's hammer. And Jordan Peele is poised to terrify us with the unknown. Again.

Hollywood is bringing out some of its biggest and most reliable players for the 2022 summer movie season, which unofficially kicks off this weekend with the help of Marvel and Disney's "Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness" and runs through the end of August. Studios and exhibitors are still making up for losses incurred during the pandemic, adjusting to new ways of doing business, including shortened release windows, competition from streaming and the need to feed their own services, and wondering if moviegoing will ever return to pre-pandemic levels.

Though the pandemic lingers on, there is optimism in the air.

"We're still waiting for older audiences to come back," said Jim Orr, the head of domestic distribution for Universal Pictures. "But it really feels like we've turned a corner."

Last week, studio executives and movie stars schmoozed with theater

owners and exhibitors at a convention in Las Vegas, hyping films that they promise will get audiences back to the movie theaters week after week.

Expectations are particularly high for "Top Gun: Maverick," which Paramount Pictures will release on May 27 after two years of pandemic postponements. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer says he never wavered in wanting to release "Top Gun: Maverick" — a full-throttle action film made with extensive aerial photography, practical effects — exclusively in theaters.

"It's the kind of movie that embraces the experience of going to the theater," said Bruckheimer.

Before the pandemic, the summer movie season could reliably produce over \$4 billion in ticket sales, or about 40% of the year's grosses according to Comscore. In 2020, that total plummeted to \$176 million. Last year recovered some with \$1.7 billion, but things were hardly back to normal—many chose to either delay releases further or employ hybrid day-and-date strategies.

This summer, though some slates are slimmer than usual, everyone is refocusing on theatrical. The ticketing service Fandango surveyed more than 6,000 ticket-buyers recently and 83% said they planned to see three or more movies

on the big screen this summer. Netflix last month also reported its first subscriber loss in ten years and expects to lose two million more this quarter.

Adam Aron, the Chairman and CEO of AMC Theatres, the nation's largest theater chain, is one who is particularly excited about the steady stream of blockbusters that will be coming to their theaters. He touted franchises like "Doctor Strange 2," "Top Gun 2," "Jurassic World: Dominion," (June 10) and "Thor: Love and Thunder" (July 8), "new film concepts" like Jordan Peele's "Nope" (July 22) and "Elvis" (June 24) and family friendly offerings from "Lightyear" (June 17) to "Minions: The Rise of Gru" (July 1).

And it looks like the summer will start off with a bang: Analysts are predicting "Doctor Strange 2" could open to \$170 million this weekend, double that of the first film.

Marvel and Disney then follow that with the new Thor, which picks up with Hemsworth's character after "Endgame" and wondering "what now?"

"It's a great, really fun, weird little group of heroes," director Taika Waititi said. "And, in my humble opinion, we have probably the best villain that Marvel's ever had in Christian Bale." But superhero movies alone don't make for a healthy cinematic landscape. Uni-

versal is proud of their diverse summer slate that includes a certain dinosaur tentpole, family animation, thrillers and horrors, comedies and period charm-ers from Focus Features like "Downton Abbey: A New Era" and "Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris."

"Our business can't devolve into just tentpoles and branded IP," Orr said. "We have something for every audience segment. Audiences are craving that and exhibitors are craving that." Jason Blum, the powerhouse producer and head of Blumhouse, hopes that Scott Derrickson's supernatural horror "The Black Phone" may be one of those special "not superhero" breakouts of the summer when it opens June 24. Beyond the franchises, there are a wide array of options: Dramas ("Where the Crawdads Sing," "Elvis"); action pics ("Bullet Train"); hair-raisers ("Watcher," "Bodies, Bodies Bodies," "Resurrection"); and even a mockumentary about a tiny seashell, "Marcel the Shell With Shoes On."

"Annihilation" writer-director Alex Garland also has an original thriller, "Men," coming to theaters May 20. Jessie Buckley plays a woman who retreats to the English countryside for some peace following a personal tragedy only to be confronted by more horrors from the men in this quaint town.

Garland is a little worried about the movie industry and the seismic shifts that are happening under the surface that are "partly cultural and partly economic." "Every time an interesting film comes out and underperforms, I get a kind of gnawing anxiety about it," Garland said.

"If the only films that make money are for younger audiences, something cultural changes. Something changes about the sorts of films that get financed."

Streaming companies, meanwhile, are still going strong. Netflix has a massive 35-plus film summer slate, including the spy thriller "The Gray Man," directed by the Russo brothers and starring Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans. Other streamers are releasing some of the most interesting titles from this year's Sundance Film Festival, including "Good Luck To You, Leo Grande" (Hulu), "Cha Cha Real Smooth" (Apple TV+), "Emergency" (Amazon) and "AM I OK?" (HBO Max).

"Streaming has a place in the world, but it's not the only thing in the world," said Blum, who is convinced that there is still an appetite for going to theaters.

For Bruckheimer, it's perhaps even more simple. "It all depends on the movies. It's always about the movies," Bruckheimer said. "If there's stuff people want to see, they're going to show up."q

Kenseth, McGriff and Shelmerdine join NASCAR Hall of Fame

By STEVE REED

AP Sports Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) —

Matt Kenseth was doing yardwork when wife Katie came outside with her phone in hand, letting him know he'd just been selected to the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

A short while later Kenseth "celebrated" the night by cooking dinner for his daughters.

"I never really thought about it," the even-keeled Kenseth said on a conference call about his chances of making the Hall of Fame.

Fellow driver Hershel McGriff and crew chief Kirk Shelmerdine were also selected to the NASCAR Hall of Fame on Wednesday. Mike Helton was named the Landmark Award winner for outstanding contributions to the sport.

They will officially be inducted into the Hall of Fame in a ceremony on Jan. 20.

Kenseth was a first-ballot selection, Shelmerdine was voted in on his third try on the modern day ballot. McGriff made the pioneer ballot on his seventh try.

The 50-year-old Kenseth, who recently ran the Boston Marathon, drove 18 full seasons on the NASCAR circuit before retiring in 2020 with 39 Cup victories and 20 poles. He's 21st on the career victory list with 39.



Matt Kenseth, center, stands next to the trophy in Victory Lane after winning the NASCAR Sprint Unlimited auto race at Daytona International Speedway, on Feb. 14, 2015, in Daytona Beach, Fla. He was elected to NASCAR's Hall of Fame on Wednesday, May 4 2022.

Associated Press

"I never looked forward (to the Hall of Fame) when I was racing and I never really looked back at some of the wins that I had," Kenseth said. "It was always the next race and what can I do better the next race?" He called the selection an honor, saying "I am really grateful for everything this spot has done for me and my family."

Kenseth reached almost every major milestone in NASCAR.

He won the Daytona 500 twice, the Coca-Cola 600

and the All-Star race. He also captured the 2003 Cup Series championship capping a dominating season in which he led the points standings for the final 32 weeks of the season. He made the NASCAR playoffs in 13 of 14 seasons and finished runner-up twice.

Kenseth made an impact from the beginning, winning Cup Series rookie of the year in 2000. He also won 29 Xfinity Series races. The 94-year-old McGriff won this first race at the 1950 Southern 500, in the

NASCAR Cup Series' second season at the age of 22. His final NASCAR race was at Tucson Speedway in the Pro Series West in 2018 — at the age of 90.

He had the longest driving career ever in NASCAR.

"Racing has always been in me," McGriff said. "It was always been about the sport." McGriff started 85 races in parts of 28 NASCAR Cup Series seasons, capturing four wins — all of those coming in 1954.

He was one of the best drivers in what is now known as

the ARCA Menards Series West. Competing in parts of 35 seasons, McGriff won 37 races — third on the all-time on the West Series wins list. His signature year came in 1986 when he won the series title.

McGriff beat out the 87-year-old A.J. Foyt, who made 128 Cup Series starts over 30 years, winning seven races and finishing in the top 10 36 times.

The 64-year-old Shelmerdine worked as a crew chief from 1977-92 and won 46 races with 15 poles and helped Dale Earnhardt capture four Cup Series championships (1986, '87, '90, '91). Over his 16-year crew chief career with Earnhardt, Ricky Rudd, James Hylton and Richard Childress, he won 46 races and posted top-10 finishes in more than half his starts.

Shelmerdine said he was "in shock" that he got in, saying he thought "it would be a few more years before it happened."

Shelmerdine said being reunited with Earnhardt and car owner Richard Childress in the NASCAR Hall of Fame is special.

"It's always been a surreal thing for me being in the middle of all these legends," Shelmerdine said. "As the years go by the stats pile up and and you start to be in the sentence with it all." □

Ben Simmons has successful back surgery, Nets announce

By TIM REYNOLDS

AP Basketball Writer

Ben Simmons underwent what was determined to be a successful back surgery in Los Angeles on Thursday. The Brooklyn Nets are hoping that he is fully recovered before the start of training camp this fall.

Simmons will need about three weeks for an "initial recovery period," the Nets said, before he can start his rehabilitation program. The procedure Simmons had was called a microdiscectomy, in which a small fragment of a herniated disc is removed to relieve pres-

sure on the spinal column. Training camp will start in late September.

Simmons last played a game on June 20, 2021. He missed this entire season — some with Philadelphia before being traded to the Nets in the move that sent James Harden to the 76ers — for a variety of reasons, including mental health concerns before the trade and then what were originally called back spasms after the trade.

The hope is the surgery will allow Simmons to get back on the court, play without pain and become

another key piece of a title-contending group led by Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving that Brooklyn envisions. Working through the mental issues that Simmons is dealing with, Nets coach Steve Nash said toward the end of Brooklyn's season, will remain a top priority for the team as well going forward. "There is a mental component with everything," Nash said late last month. "I think Ben has addressed that there is a mental component with what he's going through. But how much and where he's at with that is not for me to



speaking about. But as far as an organization, we're really pushing to support Ben in any way we can to help him improve physically and get back on the court."

This was the second full season that Simmons has missed in the past six years.

He was picked No. 1 in the 2016 NBA draft but didn't debut that season because of foot issues. He was rookie of the year in the following season, 2017-18, and was picked for the NBA All-Star games in 2019, 2020 and 2021. □

Nadal saves 4 match points to advance; Murray withdraws

By **TALES AZZONI**

AP Sports Writer

MADRID (AP) — Rafael Nadal saved four match points before outlasting David Goffin in three sets to reach the Madrid Open quarterfinals on Thursday. Nadal needed more than three hours to win 6-3, 5-7, 7-6 (9) in only his second match after an injury layoff. Nadal's 1,050th career victory came after Andy Murray withdrew from his match against Novak Djokovic because of a stomach illness. The fourth-ranked Nadal had beaten the 32nd-ranked Miomir Kecmanovic in straight sets in his opening match at the clay-court tournament, his first after missing six weeks because of a rib stress fracture.

"I knew before I arrived that this was going to be a complicated week," Nadal said. "Whatever happens now, to win two matches here is fantastic news for me." Nadal was up 5-3 in the second set before being broken twice and squandering a couple of match points to allow Goffin to even the match. He also struggled in the third and faced four match points in the tiebreaker. The first was saved with an ace, and Goffin hit the net on the second. On the next two, Nadal needed a cou-



Spain's Rafael Nadal returns the ball against David Goffin of Belgium during their match at the Mutua Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, May 5, 2022.

Associated Press

ple of perfectly executed drop shots to stay in the match.

"It was an incredible end to the match, but it should have never gotten to that point. I had it under control at 5-3," Nadal said. "But we know that things are not perfect for me right now, I have to accept that. I fought until the end, it's what I can expect from myself now." The third-seeded Nadal will next face either Cameron Norrie or Spanish sensation Carlos Alcaraz, who is celebrating his 19th

birthday Thursday. Goffin's best appearance in Madrid had been a quarterfinal appearance in 2017, when he also lost to Nadal. The former No. 7 hadn't played in Madrid since 2019. He won his first title of the season in Morocco last month. Nadal is the most successful player at the Madrid Open with five titles.

Murray, a two-time champion, announced he had to withdraw not long before he was scheduled to take the court against the top-ranked Djokovic in the

third round.

It would have been the first time Murray and Djokovic played against each other since the Serb won the Doha final in 2017.

The 78th-ranked Murray had won his first two matches in Madrid, defeating Dominic Thiem and Denis Shapovalov. The former No. 1 hadn't won consecutive matches since January and hadn't played in a clay-court tournament in nearly two years after undergoing hip surgery.

With Murray's withdrawal,

Djokovic automatically advanced to the quarterfinals — his second of the year after losing the Serbia final last month. He had lost in his first match in Monte Carlo in his first tournament on clay this season.

Djokovic's opponent will be 12th-seeded Hubert Hurkacz, who defeated qualifier Dusan Lajovic 7-5, 6-3.

Djokovic is also trying to regain his best form after not being allowed to play in the Australian Open because he was not vaccinated against the coronavirus. This is only his fourth tournament of the season. Andrey Rublev, who beat Djokovic in the Serbia final, advanced to the quarterfinals after a hard-fought 7-6 (7), 7-5 win over Daniel Evans in nearly 2 1/2 hours.

Rublev will next face fourth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas, who comfortably defeated Gregor Dimitrov 6-3, 6-4.

Defending champion Alexander Zverev advanced after qualifier Lorenzo Musetti retired with a left thigh injury while losing 6-3, 1-0.

In the women's semifinals, eighth-seeded Ons Jabeur comfortably defeated qualifier Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-2, 6-3 in just over an hour to advance to the final. The Tunisian is the first Arab player to reach a WTA 1000 final. □



Phil Mickelson hits his tee shot on the fifth hole of the South Course at Torrey Pines during the first round of the Farmers Insurance Open golf tournament Jan. 26, 2022, in San Diego.

Associated Press

By **DOUG FERGUSON**

AP Golf Writer

Federal auditors investigating Phil Mickelson's role in an insider trading scheme found his gambling losses

totalled more than \$40 million from 2010 to 2014, according to an excerpt from Alan Shipnuck's forthcoming biography. Shipnuck posted the ex-

Report: Mickelson had \$40 million in gambling losses

cerpt on his "Firepit Collective" site Thursday. His unauthorized biography on Mickelson is to be released May 17 during the PGA Championship. Mickelson is the defending champion. He has not said if he will be playing.

Mickelson has been out of public view since the final round of the Saudi International on Feb. 6. A short time later, Shipnuck posted explosive comments from Mickelson on his involvement in Greg Norman's Saudi-backed golf venture. Mickelson dismissed Saudi Arabia's human rights record, including the killing of Washington Post reporter

Jamal Khashoggi, by saying it was worth getting involved with the Saudis if it meant gaining leverage to get what he wanted from the PGA Tour.

Mickelson was a relief defendant in 2016 in the insider trading case that sent noted gambler Billy Walters to prison.

Walters since has been released and has said he is writing a book.

In the most recent excerpt on the \$40 million in gambling losses, Shipnuck wrote that government auditors investigated Mickelson's finances over four years from 2010 to 2014. The author cited a source with

direct access to the documents.

Mickelson's annual income in 2012 — the time of the Dean Foods stock deal that netted Mickelson nearly \$1 million in one week — was estimated at about \$48 million.

Shipnuck also said money was largely behind his split with longtime caddie Jim "Bones" Mackay in 2017. He wrote that Mackay left Mickelson after the Memorial that year over a series of "simmering grievances," including hundreds of thousands of dollars in back pay. Shipnuck wrote more details on that would be in the book. □